



# Homemade Method™

## Week 9: Learn how to Perfectly Sear Meats & Fish

### Overview

Searing is a stove cooking technique in which the surface of the food being cooked (normally, meat or fish) is caramelized by cooking at a very high temperature. Searing is an excellent cooking technique because it's fast and it seals in maximum flavor and juice, with minimal added fat. In addition, the flavors on the pan can be used to season cooked or raw vegetables.

This week, you will learn how to sear meat, fish or vegetables properly, so you get crispy, tender & juicy results every time.

You will learn how to tell when to flip, when to leave alone and how to develop a crust with your proteins. You will discover how to identify when your beef, chicken or fish is done. Finally, we will troubleshoot some common searing challenges.

You will also learn about the right set of pans to use for stove cooking, covering topics such as when should you use teflon coated vs. stainless steel pans and how to select & clean your pans.

### How to get the Perfect Sear

#### 1. Prepare your ingredients:

- a. For meat, it's best to use a high quality cut and go for boneless meats
- b. Sear the whole steak / fillet / breast or vegetable without slicing, and sear one ingredient at a time
- c. You can even use a vegetable like an eggplant, Portabella mushroom or asparagus
- d. Bring your meat or fish to room temperature to avoid overcooking the outside and undercooking the inside
- e. **Pat your meat or fish completely dry with a paper towel. Extra water can result in steam and will not sear in a crispy crust and your steak might get tough and leathery**

- f. Add salt, seasonings & a little oil to coat the outside of the meat or fish.
- g. Note: Salt on it's own is a great seasoning so don't be intimidated if you don't know where to start with seasonings. Note: In a few weeks we cover herbs & spices.

## 2. Choose the right pans & oils

- a. It's best to use pans that can handle high heat and cook evenly (stainless steel or cast iron). But for delicate fish, it's best to stick to non-stick pans.
- b. Pick a pan that's just big enough for your meat - if it's much bigger, the juices will flow out and burn up.
- c. Make sure you use oils that have a high smoke point (preventing oxidation which is damaging to your health). Examples are sunflower, canola & soybean oils.

## 3. Add meat or fish when the pan is HOT:

- a. Put the pan on the stove on high heat.
- b. Tip: test with water by splashing on the pan, if it dances and jumps, then it's hot enough to add oils.
- c. If the pan is too cool when you add the meat, it can stick and tear when you try to turn it.
- d. Add about 1-2 tbspn oil per person you are cooking for.
- e. Be careful not to heat oils up to 'smoking point' (ie. where the oil starts smoking), as this means the oil has oxidized and released health damaging free radicals. If this happens, then pour the oil out, cool/clean the pan and add new oil.
- f. Place the meat or fish fillet in the pan in a motion away from your body, to avoid splattering oil. We recommend using tongs.

## 4. Do not move the meat or fish once it is in the pan

- a. To ensure you get a nice browning & crust, do not move the meat or fish once it is in the pan.
- b. A thick chicken breast cooks in around 6-7 minutes per side
- c. A thick piece of fish is about 3-4 minutes per side.
- d. For steak, cooking time is also about 2-4mins per side for a 1 inch thickness.
- e. It all depends on cooking temperature and thickness.
- f. If using a thermometer test the thickest part.

## **5. Flip & cook the other side!**

- a. The cooked side should be nicely browned.
- b. If it looks grey, your pan isn't hot enough and didn't have enough oil under the meat.
- c. Make sure it's cooked through the middle - especially chicken. If you want to cook the middle more, then turn down the heat and cover while it cooks through. Alternatively, you can place in the oven on medium heat for about 10 minutes while the middle cooks.
- d. If you're cooking meat, especially steak, let it 'rest' by covering with aluminum foil for about 5-10 mins before serving. This gives the meat a chance to re-absorb the flavorful juices.

## **6. Optional: Make a pan sauce or gravy:**

- a. A pan sauce is made using the flavorings in the pan.
- b. Just add about a cup of acid (ie, vinegar or lemon juice), stock or water to the pan, and scrape the pan with a spatula on low heat, stir. This is called 'deglazing'. The result is a delicious sauce or gravy.
- c. Note: You can also throw some vegetables in the pan for 3-4 mins on medium heat with your juices and make it a complete meal. Broccolini, cherry tomatoes and asparagus work especially well.

## **Searing in a Nutshell**

- 1. Take an entire boneless piece of meat, fish or chicken**
- 2. Make sure it's at room temperature, pat dry**
- 3. Coat in a generous sprinkling of salt & 1 tbs oil**
- 4. Heat up a stainless steel or cast iron pan until it's VERY HOT - sprinkle in some water, if it spits, it's ready**
- 5. Add 1-2 tbs high smoke point oil per person (sunflower, canola)**
- 6. Add your meat and cook without turning or moving**
- 7. Turn when it's ready (3-6 mins, depending on the type of meat - see our guide), cook the other side, remove from heat, wrap in aluminum foil and let it rest for a couple mins.**
- 8. Enjoy!**

# How to tell when your meat is done

The only way to know if your meat is really cooked is to use a thermometer.

However, here are a few tricks used by Chefs:

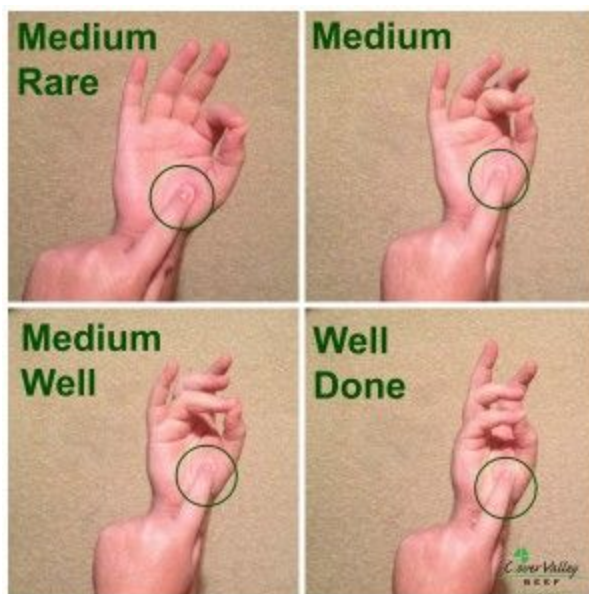
**Fish:** Use a fork and press into a section. If it flakes off easily, the fish is done.

**Chicken:** Press with the back of the tongs. If the juices come out pinkish, it is not done. If the juices run clear, then the chicken is done.

**Beef:** Watch for a pooling of red liquid blood on top of the beef to indicate 'doneness' or that it's ready to flip. Another trick is to use the touch test:

## ***Touch Test for Beef 'Doneness'***

- *Palm face up: Touch the fleshy section at the base of your thumb. This is what raw steak feels like.*
- *Now make an 'Ok sign' by touching your thumb and forefinger. Touch the fleshy section at the base of your thumb. It's a little firmer. This is what rare steak feels like. Continue to touch your thumb with a different finger. As you move along your fingers, the section of your hand at the base of your thumb will get firmer.*
- *When your thumb touches the middle finger, if you press the section of your hand at the base of your thumb, this is what medium steak feels like.*
- *If you continue to press your thumb against your pinkie finger, and then push the meat at the base of your thumb, this is what a well done steak feels like.*



## Trouble Shooting for Searing

*Help! The bottom of my pan is coated in water... and my meat is not getting crispy*

Lots of foods release water when they are cooked. Are there vegetables in your pan? If so, remove them when searing. Did you pat your meat or fish dry before adding to the pan? Did you heat up the pan properly to really HOT before adding to the pan?

Rescue tip: Don't panic! It can be saved. Remove from heat, strain the juice into a cup of water (save this and you can use it later to cook vegetables or make a sauce). Add oil to the pan, heat up to HOT, then add your meat back in - you should now be able to sear again.

*Help! My meat is grey and stuck to the bottom of the pan*

You added your meat too soon before the pan heated up. Rescue tip: Remove from the pan, add oil, heat up to HOT and then add the meat back on.

*Help! My steak is always so tough!*

Well we can't rescue this one, but here's some tips for next time: Always buy a QUALITY cut - new york steak, porterhouse, fillet etc. Good steak is one of those things worth paying more for. Cool to room temperature before cooking. Only turn your steak once when it is in the pan. Don't overcook - Check out our 'touch doneness' test above.

*Help! My salmon steak is always dry & overdone and the skin is never crispy?*

Easy to fix! Heat up your pan to very HOT and coat in oil. Add the salmon steak with the skin down. As it's cooking, spoon the oils that are released back onto the top of the salmon. Cook for about 4-5 mins for a thick salmon steak. If you like, squeeze lemon juice over the top (watch out, the oil will splatter everywhere). Now, flip it over - the skin should be crispy and blackened. Cook the other side quickly - just for about 2 mins. The result will be a juicy, rare, lemony salmon steak with a crispy, browned outside.

### *Help! My chicken / pork tenderloin is raw in the middle*

This is a common searing challenge and not your fault! You can either turn down the heat and cover and cook for 10 mins or so until it's done in the middle, or pop it in the oven for 10-20 mins until it's done.

### *Help! My house is filling with smoke and my fire alarm is going off*

Actually, you are probably doing it right! Searing generates a lot of smoke, so turn your hood on, open the windows or turn off the fire alarm before you start! And never leave the pan unattended.

## Stove Cooking Equipment

You will need a set of good frying pans. Try to find a set which have an aluminum core between two layers of stainless steel. And pans cook better if they have some weight to them - as this reduces your risks of burning your food.

### Use stainless steel pans for:

- medium to high temperature cooking
- searing meats
- Gravys
- General stove top cooking

### Use non-stick or teflon coated pans for:

- pancakes
- eggs
- rice dishes
- dish
- fragile & sticky dishes

Note: Some studies have found that teflon pans give off toxic fumes when they are heated to medium or high temperatures, so use stainless steel for those cooking needs, if possible.

**The best way to clean non-stick pans** is to add equal parts water & vinegar to the pan and bring to a boil. Let it cool and then wipe away grease and wash normally.

**To wash your stainless steel or cast iron pans**, it's best to first soak them for several hours. Then use a scouring pad with some water and baking soda or Bar Keeper's

Friend (available at Hardware Stores) and scrub vigorously. Do not use steel wool or copper based scrubbers as they will scratch the cookware. Remember to rub dry with a cloth when you are done to avoid water spots.

## Other Stove Cooking Methods

**Sautéing** is a method of cooking food, that uses a small amount of oil or fat in a shallow pan over relatively high heat. Ingredients are usually cut into pieces or thinly sliced to facilitate fast cooking.

**Pan frying**- a cooking techniques using the minimal amount of cooking oil or fat (compared to shallow frying or deep frying); typically using just enough oil to coat the pan.

**Stir fry**- is a chinese cooking technique fried in a small amount of very hot oil while being stirred in a wok.

**Blanching**- a cooking technique where a food items is par cooking in boiling water in a timed interval, then cooled in a ice bath or cold water.

**Poaching/Etouve**- a cooking technique in which a food item is simmered in a small amount of liquid.